

## REVIEWS OF RECENT BOOKS

**ELLIS, HAVELOCK.** *Studies in the Psychology of Sex.* Vol. VI.: *Sex in Relation to Society.* F. A. Davis Company, Philadelphia; 1910; pp. i.-xvi., 1-656, indices; price \$3.00 (12s.) net.

DR. ELLIS, in a very interesting postscript (which gives the reader a glimpse of personality), says "it is more than thirty years ago since the first resolve to write the work now here concluded began to shape itself, still dimly though insistently; the period of study and preparation occupied over fifteen years, ending with the publication of *Man and Woman*, put forward as a prolegomenon to the main work which, in the writing and publication, has occupied the fifteen subsequent years." He disclaims, with characteristic modesty, any title to chant a *Nunc Dimittis*, but the whole world of thought, we have little doubt, congratulates him on the completion of the great work, which, as he himself says, he was born to do. Like all great efforts, both of imagination and of science, the *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* is a work which has not only triumphed over inertia and opposition, but also forced its environment of Western thought to adapt itself to it, in the sense of accepting the importance of the subject and of realising in its own altered attitude the spirit of the inquiry.

These six volumes are in their sphere unique. Their character, not only pioneering, but, in principle and in many issues, conclusive, is analogous to that of *The Origin of Species*. They, like Darwin's work, have brought light into one of the last remaining dark places, and have re-vitalised, if we may change our metaphor, a portion of the social brain that had long been paralysed.

This sixth and final volume will perhaps to the general reader be the most interesting and instructive, concerned as it is with the relation of sexual psychology to social phenomena and social habits. Its contents are arranged with masterly perspective; in the foreground we have *The Mother and her Child*, at the end of the vista is the eugenic meaning of the whole picture—*The Science of Procreation*. On the first page it is written: "A man's destiny stands not in the future but in the past. That, rightly considered, is the most vital of all vital facts. Every child thus has a right to choose his own ancestors. Naturally he can only do this vicariously, through his parents. It is the most serious and sacred duty of the future father to choose one-half of the ancestral and hereditary character of his future child; it is the most serious and sacred duty of the future mother to make a similar choice. In choosing each other they have between them chosen the whole ancestry of their child. They have determined the stars that will rule his fate." On the last page: "we have now at last reached the point from which we started, the moment of conception, and the child again lies in its mother's womb. There remains no more to be said. The divine cycle of life is completed." Always weighty, Dr. Ellis' conclusions are extraordinarily well balanced. In this volume the deliberate ingestion of personal bias,—hardly, however, distinguishable, so fine is the art, from impersonal torque,—renders the argument more dynamic, as living as the couple, of personality and method, which gives it movement.

Throughout the practical conclusions of the book, for instance on the question of sexual education, the fact is emphasised that at any given moment a society is in transition, in other words, it must allow for its

traditional environment. From this point of view the connection of a movement like Christianity with the "valuation of sexual love" or with the function of chastity is extremely significant. Dr. Ellis gives us, in the chapter on "The Function of Chastity," an original study of the influence of Christianity from a field of material which he found virgin soil. "Primitive Christian chastity was on one side a strenuous discipline." This is well known. The author's new ground is very different, though complementary. "On another side it was a romance, and this indeed was its most specifically Christian side, for athletic asceticism has been associated with the most various religious and philosophic beliefs. If, indeed, it had not possessed the charm of a new sensation, of a delicious freedom, of an unknown adventure, it would never have conquered the European world. . . . The Christians rejected the grosser forms of sexual indulgence, but in doing so they entered with a more delicate ardor into the more refined forms of sexual intimacy." The whole study of this fascinating episode is a contribution to the history of literature and æsthetics.

An illuminating account, historical and sociological, but with the psychological aspect prominent, leads to this summary of the present situation, "on the one hand there is a tendency for its elevation, in association with the growing humanity and refinement of civilisation . . . on the other hand, but perhaps through the same dynamic force, there is a tendency towards the slow elimination of prostitution by the successful competition of higher and purer methods of sexual relationship freed from pecuniary considerations." The evolutionary spirit of all the author's work is conspicuously useful to the reader in this last volume; "the facts of human life are more important than the forms." On each subject he succeeds in laying before "moralists and sociologists and the community generally" a summing-up, from which they can crystallise a practical verdict, ready to be carried out. As we have suggested, the practical importance of these *Studies* culminates in the final volume. The attitude of society towards venereal disease, sexual morality, marriage, and the science of procreation,—a difficult subject to disentangle, is so carefully worked out that we can estimate each thread of the skein, and almost see how the pattern may alter.

General psychology itself is enriched by the chapter on *The Art of Love*, the inclusion of which and the recognition of the importance of the subject are a characteristic example of the author's wide purview and balanced judgment. Eugenists will do well to read *The Science of Procreation* concurrently, so to speak, with *The Art of Love*. And of course this combination is a vital condition of the whole problem of Eugenics. Only by recognising it can we balance the claims of the individual and of the race, or of the body and of the brain in evolution.

Humanity is at last raising itself out of that extraordinary slough of hypocrisy, pruriency, and obscenity which it has made the environment of its most sacred function. For the practical man who recognises this ascent, the discussion of wise and unwise eugenic methods will be instructive. A eugenic attitude, a eugenic spirit must be cultivated and strengthened before any legal or authoritative experiments are tried.

One closes the book with a feeling of faith and hope. We realise that man is, so to speak, at last growing up and putting away childish things of ignorance, superstition, and slave-morality. Of these and of their origin, of their slow but inevitable supersession by scientific principles he can here read. The work is not least an evolutionary study. The author may be proud of it; it is worthy to stand by the side of *The Origin of Species*. Similar in spirit, it is similar in achievement, part of which is to show that its sphere is in profound and eternal union with the other planets of the cosmic system of life.

A. E. CRAWLEY.